

BIRTH OF THE LIVING DEAD



76 mins / Color & B+W / 2013 /NTSC

A Feature Length Documentary

Written, Produced, Directed & Edited by Rob Kuhns



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“It’s taken me 45 years to stop biting my fingernails after first seeing Night of the Living Dead. Having just watched Rob Kuhns’ mesmerizing documentary about that classic horror story I finally understand why I was not only scared out of my wits, but was simultaneously watching a cinematic breakthrough and cultural phenomenon. Birth of the Living Dead is immensely watchable and abundantly enlightening – with one ah-hah moment after another – and when you’ve seen it, you’ll be thinking and talking all night (first lock your doors).”

-Bill Moyers

Synopsis

In 1968 a young college drop-out named George A. Romero directed “Night of the Living Dead,” a low budget horror film that shocked the world, became an icon of the counterculture, and spawned a zombie industry worth billions of dollars that continues to this day.

“Birth of the Living Dead,” a new documentary, shows how Romero gathered an unlikely team of Pittsburghers -- policemen, iron workers, teachers, ad-men, housewives and a roller-rink owner -- to shoot, with a revolutionary guerrilla, run-and-gun style, his seminal film. During that process Romero and his team created an entirely new and horribly chilling monster – one that was undead and feasted upon human flesh.

This new documentary also immerses audiences into the singular time in which “Night” was shot. Archival footage of the horrors of Vietnam and racial violence at home combined with iconic music from the 60s invites viewers to experience how Romero’s tumultuous film reflected this period in American history. “Birth of the Living Dead” shows us how this young filmmaker created a world-renowned horror film that was also a profound insight into how our society really works.

Director’s Bio- ROB KUHNS

Birth of the Living Dead is Rob's first feature length documentary as a Director. He Co-Directed/Edited two broadcast documentaries, Enemies of War (PBS, 2001) and This is a Game, Ladies (PBS, 2003, Audience Award – AFI Silverdoc Festival). His many editing credits include Moyers and Company (2011 - Present), the dramatic television series Sleeper Cell (Showtime, Golden Globe nomination, 2005), and Adam Clayton Powell (Academy Award nomination, 1990). Rob Wrote and Directed the short comedy, King’s Day Out, (1993 Sundance Film Festival). This year he received an individual artist grant from the New York State Council of the Arts.



Production Notes

“Birth of the Living Dead” was shot in New York City, Toronto and Los Angeles between the end of 2006 and the Summer of 2011. It is directed by Rob Kuhns, who has been editing documentaries in New York since 1987. It is produced by Kuhns and his wife, Esther Cassidy, who also collaborated on the documentary, “Enemies of War,” that told the story of El Salvador’s bloody civil war as seen through the eyes of a U.S. Congressman, a U.S. Ambassador, an American priest, and an FMLN guerilla fighter and his family. “Enemies of War” was broadcast nationally on PBS in 2001, and was selected for the Los Angeles and Chicago Latino Film Festivals, the City of Angels Film Festival, and won awards at the Columbus Film Festival and Chicago International Film Competition.

Kuhns has been a fan of Romero’s work since the early 1980s when he first saw “Night of the Living Dead” at a midnight show. “Night” had been playing regularly in theaters in New York since it first came out in 1968. Before considering making a documentary, Kuhns read about Romero and became fascinated with the story of the making of “Night.” Here was this crew of mostly working class people, not very experienced in filmmaking and with very few resources, coming together to make a seminal and world-shaking film. It was a great story of a “little-movie-that-could.”

After extensive interviews with George A. Romero in Toronto, Kuhns started editing the documentary. Kuhns’ previous experience working as an Editor for “Bill Moyers Journal” and later on “Moyers and Company” gave him the opportunity to explore the powerful archival images of American history in the 1960’s. Kuhns surveyed television news stories of the racial violence exploding across the country and horrific combat footage of the Vietnam War. He also saw the U.S. government responses to both. Kuhns realized that Romero and his collaborators created “Night of the Living Dead,” a film about the world coming to an end, at a historic time of enormous U. S. upheaval. “Night” was revealing itself as a living document of the time in which it was made.

Romero, “There was a good deal of sort of anger. Mostly that the 60s didn’t work. You know, we thought we had changed with world or were part of some sort of a reform that was going to make things better. And all of a sudden it wasn’t any better. It wasn’t any different.”

Once Kuhns illuminated the historical context, his new documentary evolved into something much richer than the “making of” film that he originally envisioned. Michael Winship, head writer for “Bill Moyers Journal,” recommended Mark Harris’ highly-praised book, “Pictures at a Revolution,” which looked at the cultural and political context of the films that were nominated for the Academy Award in 1968, the same year “Night” was released. Harris spoke about how intricately and complexly “Night” is connected to that moment in history and about the many radical choices Romero made which redefined the horror film. Kuhns added Harris’ remarkable take on “Night of the Living Dead” to the documentary.

Filmmaker Larry Fessenden, who has been compared with Romero for his thoughtful horror films, provided another key interview. He also speaks about some of the radical choices Romero made to create such a groundbreaking horror film:

“When you play with the expectations of the classic structure, and then you defy them and the wrong person gets killed. This is what’s upsetting, that’s what haunts, that’s what creates a feeling of dread.”

Critic Elvis Mitchell first saw the film when he was 10 at a Drive-In Theater in Detroit, soon after his city experienced racial violence. “If there had been more resources devoted to the movie, and more consideration, and if it wasn't like run and gun filmmaking, It was like hearing Public Enemy for the first time, or for my parent's generation seeing Elvis Presley for the first time. It's just that kind of, oh my God, that electricity.”

Chiz Schultz, producer of Harry Belafonte’s TV specials in the late 60s, discusses how revolutionary it was for Romero to cast a black actor, Duane Jones, in the lead but to also never have his race referred to or mentioned in the film. Schultz, who also produced "Ganja and Hess," a dramatic film also starring Duane Jones, was a first-hand witness to the racism of the 60s. During the rehearsal of one of Belafonte’s shows, singer Petula Clark touched Belafonte’s arm, which caused a sponsor to demand there be no physical contact between them. Race and the casting of Jones is a major theme and is discussed by all of the interviewees.

Sam Pollard, a documentary director, producer of Spike Lee’s documentaries, and a film professor at NYU, analyzes the film’s plot and structure and also offers a historical perspective.

“There was a sense of chaos and sense of tension in the American fabric which means things are going to change. So I think that what Romero was doing with “Night of the Living Dead” points to this unraveling.”

Film Critic and Author of "Shock Value," Jason Zinoman, explores Romero’s film’s enormous influence and the seminal creation of the zombie, now one of the most popular monsters in horror films.

“All these zombies all go back to Romero. There’s no movie director that’s responsible for the vampire. There’s no movie director that’s responsible for Frankenstein. There’s no movie director that’s responsible for the Werewolf... ...What we know of as a zombie, the “it’s alive” moment of it was, 1968, George Romero, ‘Night of the Living Dead’ in Pittsburgh.”

Living legend Gale Anne Hurd, Executive Producer of “Walking Dead,” as well as Producer of “The Terminator” and “Aliens” explains how the zombies in "Night", as well as its mythology, are the basis of her hit show. Hurd got her start with Roger Corman and also speaks about what it’s like to make a film with little experience and no money.

Romero takes us through his efforts to get the film distributed – it did not ignite a bidding war – and the ferocious attacks on “Night” by U.S. critics when first released. Variety, for instance, called it, "an unrelieved orgy of sadism" which “casts serious aspersions on the integrity and social responsibility of its Pittsburgh-based makers."

That all changed when the film went to Europe where it received huge box office and lavish praise from prestigious film journals like “Positif” and “Sight and Sound.” “Night of the Living Dead” was eventually invited to become part of the permanent collection of the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

In spite of the enormous success of the film worldwide, Romero and his partners got only a small fraction of the profits. The distributor accidentally removed the copyright notice from the negative and “Night” fell into the public domain. The film went viral, with pirated copies playing worldwide. There’s no way to know how much money it has made.

The documentary ends with a tribute to and interview with Bill Hinzman, who played the “graveyard zombie” – the first zombie in the film, and the first one built on Romero’s mythology, which spawned so many imitators. Hinzman is shown at a zombie convention at the Monroeville Mall, PA, not far from where “Night of the Living Dead” was shot. He’s surrounded by adoring fans, many of whom were born decades after the film was made. When asked how he feels about all of the attention, Hinzman says, “Sometimes, I really do blush I think under the make up because it’s really kind of embarrassing. I’m sure you’ve heard the stories of actors are always afraid they’ll get discovered that they don’t have any talent or anything. And sometimes I feel that way. I’m a little embarrassed because every Sunday night I have to take the damn garbage out (laugh), and on the way out I’ll go, “I’m a legend! What the hell am I taking the damn garbage out for?!” (Laugh) Why aren’t I rich? But that’s, that’s life! But it’s so much fun to do these things. My wife kicks me out every once in a while and says, “Go to one of those events. Get your ego built back up again.” I say, ‘Okay.’”

Interviews

GEORGE A. ROMERO	Filmmaker
LARRY FESSENDEN	Filmmaker
MARK HARRIS	Author
GALE ANNE HURD	Producer
ELVIS MITCHELL	Film Critic
SAM POLLARD	Filmmaker
CHIZ SCHULTZ	Producer
JASON ZINOMAN`	Film Critic

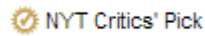


Crew

Writer, Producer, Director and Editor	ROB KUHNS
Producer	ESTHER CASSIDY
Executive Producer	LARRY FESSENDEN
Directors of Photography	SUPROTIM BOSE, MICHAEL GRIPPO
Additional Camera	RAHSALIH L. CAMPENNI, GORO TOSHIMA
Art Director	DALE ROBBINS
Illustration and Graphic Design	GARY PULLIN
Motion Graphics	TIM D'AMICO
Original Music by	GARY POZNER , BRIAN GOSS
Production Sound Mixers	SUPROTIM BOSE, MICHAEL GRIPPO, RAHSALIH L. CAMPENNI, GORO TOSHIMA
Sound Designer	TIM STIMPSON
Re-Recording Mixer	JEFF SEELYE
Audio Post Facility	DIG IT AUDIO, INC.
Colorist	SIKAY TANG
Archival Research	LEANE CLIFTON
Consulting Producers	SALLY ROY, ISMAEL GONZALEZ, CHRIS ARNOLD
Consulting Editors	THOMAS HANEKE, EMIR LEWIS
Technical Advisors	PASCAL A KESSON, CHIP MCGOWAN, JONATHAN BERMAN
Translations	THOMAS DEVANEY, MICHAEL WINSHIP
Production Consultant	JOHNNY RAMOS
Music Clearances	DREW BAYERS
Production Partners	JIM KUHNS, JEAN JUROW, DAVE DAVIS, MARY GRANDELIS, PEGGY MILLER

The New York Times

The Making of an Immortal Movie: 'Birth of the Living Dead,' in Restless Times



In 1967, George Romero, a Bronx-born 27-year-old transplanted to Pittsburgh, shot a cheap independent movie in rural Pennsylvania. The film, "Night of the Living Dead," became a horror classic, spawning sequels and helping to inspire the vogue for zombies raging on television and in multiplexes. Rob Kuhns's informative documentary "Birth of the Living Dead" recounts the risks, improvisation and innovation that went into the movie's production.

Mr. Romero, who previously had shot commercials and segments for "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood," praises and vividly describes his inexperienced cast and crew, locals who held multiple jobs on the set, many playing zombies.

The gore — a meatpacker supplied animal guts for the human viscera — was shocking for its time, and fed the film's notoriety, as did stark depictions of fratricide and parricide. But perhaps its most resonant element was the fate of Ben (Duane Jones), the sole survivor of a zombie siege on a country house. Ben, who is black (though not originally written as such), is shot dead by sheriffs; to 1960s audiences, the evocation of police abuses in civil right marches was unmistakable.

There are too many predictable talking heads here — including the critics Elvis Mitchell and Jason Zinoman (past and present critics for The New York Times) and Mark Harris — and, alas, no Pittsburgh participants aside from the director. But Mr. Romero, manifesting a self-effacing demeanor and sensible humanity, is a most agreeable raconteur. He can rest assured knowing that "Night of the Living Dead," now in the Library of Congress's National Film Registry, shall never die.

Los Angeles Times

Review: Shining new light on 'Night of the Living Dead'

An examination of the zombie film that spawned apocalypse cinema — plus a few hit TV shows — is surprisingly lively.

The documentary "Birth of the Living Dead" is a nifty little tribute to that granddaddy of the modern zombie movie, George A. Romero's "Night of the Living Dead." Writer-director-editor Rob Kuhns (he also produced with wife, Esther Cassidy) enjoyably recounts how, in 1967, Romero and an assortment of Pittsburgh locals shot a micro-budget chiller that would unexpectedly change the face of horror films.

The shocking "Night," which Romero shot, edited, co-wrote and directed, spawned an endless parade of zombie pictures — including numerous made by Romero himself — along with comic books, video games and TV shows such as current hit "The Walking Dead."

Kuhns intriguingly explores how "Night" so aptly mirrored its time period — that tense, chaotic era of racial unrest, anti-Vietnam War sentiment and an increasingly anti-authoritarian vibe. That the subtext-heavy movie's lead hero, although written colorblind, was portrayed by an African American actor (Duane Jones) proved especially groundbreaking.

Filled with lively, candid interview clips with a jaunty Romero, plus smart chats with film critics, authors, filmmakers and others, "Birth" efficiently tracks "Night's" guerrilla-style production, roller-coaster theatrical release, wildly varied critical response and eventual status as a highly profitable — if accidentally copyright-impaired — cult classic.

Footage of a Bronx, N.Y., schoolteacher showing youngsters "Night" for a Literacy Through Film class is also fun. But talk of Romero's post-"Night" career, as well as new testimony from the film's other original participants (nice postscript with "graveyard zombie" player Bill Hinzman aside), is surprisingly scarce.

THE **Hollywood** *REPORTER*

Birth of the Living Dead: Film Review

1:10 PM PST 11/5/2013 by Frank Scheck

The Bottom Line

Although highly entertaining, this loving tribute to Romero's cult classic could have used a little more meat on its zombie bones.

Rob Kuhns' documentary chronicles the creation of George A. Romero's horror film classic "Night of the Living Dead"

Hard to believe as it may be, there once was a time when zombies were barely a blip on the pop culture radar. That all changed in 1968, when a low-budget, independent film called *Night of the Living Dead* ignited a sea change in horror history that not only continues unabated but, thanks to such recent touchstones as *The Walking Dead* and *World War Z*, is bigger than ever. Rob Kuhns' aptly titled documentary *Birth of the Living Dead* chronicles the creation of George A. Romero's cult classic in highly entertaining if not exactly comprehensive fashion.

"Who knew that we were ever going to finish this thing," muses a jovial Romero in one of many interview segments. He and some partners each kicked in a mere \$600 to get the production rolling in Pittsburgh, renting an abandoned farmhouse and shooting guerrilla-style with the help of numerous friends.

Romero, only 27 years old at the time, had cut his teeth working for such local television shows as *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* -- no small irony there -- and making local television commercials. He recalls that he was inspired by Richard Matheson's novel *I Am Legend*, as well as the revolutionary fervor sweeping the country in the era of the Civil Rights movement and the Vietnam War.

Director Kuhns takes pains to examine Romero's film in the social and political context of the era, spending much screen time on the radical casting of African-American actor Duane Jones in the heroic lead role. The character's race was unspecified in the script, and the fact that it's never once brought up in the film itself was particularly striking at a time when Sidney Poitier was a major box office star, with such racially charged films as *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* and *In the Heat of the Night*.

But it's the more mundane aspects of the film's production that provides the documentary with its most entertaining aspects, such as the fact that one of the investors, who also happened to be a meat packer, provided real entrails for its more gory moments. An actual local television news broadcaster played one

in the film; most of the cast members did double duties, including designing the grotesque makeup; and local residents were recruited to fill the ranks of the zombie hordes.

When the film was completed, Romero shopped it around to various distributors, including American International Pictures, which wanted the downbeat ending changed. When it was eventually released, it played such theaters as 42nd Street's New Amsterdam Theater, then a rundown grind house, and was given a largely negative, critical reception, including a three-line dismissive review in *The New York Times*. A copywriting technicality resulted in Romero losing the rights, and the film's vast profits have never been accurately tallied.

Besides the engaging Romero -- "I don't know if there's any such thing as a bad zombie...I love 'em all!" he gushes at one point -- there are also insightful interviews with horror filmmaker Larry Fessenden (who also executive produced), *Walking Dead* producer Gale Anne Hurd, and such cultural commentators as Mark Harris, Elvis Mitchell and Jason Zinoman.

Still, for all its juicy anecdotes, the documentary seems skimpy, failing, for instance, to even mention Romero's later career, which included numerous sequels and zombie-related films. Instead, an inordinate amount of screen time is devoted to a Bronx elementary school classroom where the teacher, for some reason, has decided that teaching his young students how to act like the zombies in Romero's film is ideal curriculum material.

<http://insidemovies.ew.com/2013/10/16/capsule-movie-reviews-oct-16-kill-your-darlings-and-six-more/>

Entertainment WEEKLY

NEW RELEASE

Birth of the Living Dead

NOT RATED, 1 HR., 16 MINS.

Rob Kuhns' marvelous doc about the making of *Night of the Living Dead* looks at all the ways one low-budget, flesh-eating horror movie changed the world. It's full of juicy anecdotes that detail how George A. Romero made necessity into the mother of nightmare invention, and EW's Mark Harris and NPR's Elvis Mitchell eloquently testify to how *Night* forged a new age of socially relevant horror almost by accident. (Also available on iTunes and VOD) **A** —Owen Gleiberman



Zombie Doc *Birth of the Living Dead* Is Full of Riveting Romero Anecdotes

By Ernest Hardy *Tuesday, Nov 5 2013*

Night of the Living Dead, George A. Romero's 1968 zombie flick classic, has long been the subject of intense critical analysis laying bare its rich social and political commentary.

Romero not only set in motion the zombie fetish that thrives globally today, but created a film that simultaneously captured the late-'60s zeitgeist and created a pop-cultural template still used to critique the ills that gird the status quo. With that in mind, a lot of the information and insights that documentary filmmaker Rob Kuhns presents in *Birth of the Living Dead* won't be news for longtime scholars (academics or laypeople) of the film.

That *Night* was inspired by Richard Matheson's seminal 1954 novel, *I Am Legend*, that it was groundbreaking in the way it used its African-American lead actor, and that it was a critique of mainstream America's somnambulism leading up to the Vietnam War and civil rights turmoil are all already well known.

What distinguishes this doc from much of the tedious critical prose Romero has inspired is the fan-boy and fan-girl ardor that fuels its smarts — both behind and in front of the camera. Interview subjects, from producer Gale Anne Hurd (who says she drew heavily from the film in creating the cable TV hit *The Walking Dead*) to various film scholars, directors, and critics, all key their commentary into the film's visceral power and the unpretentious intelligence behind it.

That includes a glorious bit discussing how Sidney Poitier's blackness was being used in Hollywood at the time, and how *Night* upended the protocol. It's the anecdotes and remembrances of Romero — a 27-year-old college dropout losing his movie-making cherry with *Night* — that make the film, though.

An utterly charming figure who often ends his sentences with "man," he fills in behind-the-scenes tales that likely haven't been heard by many before, and they are riveting; his story of the film's copyright battle is jaw-dropping.

<http://www.bostonglobe.com/arts/movies/2013/10/31/long-before-walking-dead-there-were-living-dead/IZB2019hbrVFBiS7QOKASK/story.html>

The Boston Globe

Before walking dead, there was 'Night of the Living Dead'

In the war between zombies and vampires for the domination of American popular culture, the zombies currently seem to have the edge. So suggests a montage in Rob Kuhns's amusing but perfunctory documentary about the origins of the 1968 ur-text of zombiedom, George Romero's "Night of the Living Dead." This brisk roundup shows the proliferation of the undead anthropophages in movies, TV, video games, comic books, and mash-up novels like "Pride and Prejudice and Zombies."

How did this happen? You won't find out here. As the title indicates, Kuhns focuses on the film's birth rather than its afterlife. His account of Romero's seat-of-the-pants guerrilla tactics in making what was his first feature film fascinates and inspires. Less compelling, though, is the random assortment of talking heads, including film critic and TV host Elvis Mitchell and indie horror filmmaker Larry Fessenden (also executive producer of the film), who speculate about the roots of "Night" in such traumas as the Vietnam War and '60s racial violence. Cutting from the film's grisly scenes to stock TV-news footage underscores the obvious. It doesn't take long to get the point, and even at 76 minutes, the film drags.

Conspicuous by their absence are surviving members of the original cast and crew, who might have added to Romero's own colorful recollection of the film's gestation. People like screenwriter John A. Russo, who also played one of the zombies and agreed to be set ablaze — without any protective clothing (he was advised to roll on the ground "if things got hot"). Or producer-actor Russell Streiner, who got the sound mix free of charge by beating the owner of the studio in a chess game.

But Kuhns does offer a thoughtful account of the film's initial reception, in particular the harsh early reviews. Vincent Canby dismissed the film in three sentences in *The New York Times*. And an outraged Roger Ebert reported the traumatized reactions of underaged viewers at the matinee screening he attended (Ebert later reviewed the movie again and gave it 3½ stars).

Quite a contrast to the critical respect such films get in this age of Comic-Con. And today's kids would find the graphic intestine-chewing gore rather quaint, as is demonstrated here when "Night" is screened for a classroom of giggling schoolchildren. In its day a transgressive challenge to the norms of society and cinema, "Night of the Living Dead" would eventually inspire a multi-billion dollar industry that churns out product about as subversive as a Miley Cyrus video.

Not that Romero himself has benefited much from his own monstrous creation. At 73, he still bubbles with anarchic mirth as he remembers those crazy early days of his career, and it's only when he recalls the "dumb mistake" that deprived him of the copyright to his film that he seems at a loss for words. A plague of zombies has nothing on soulless businessmen.

Interviews:

http://blogs.westword.com/showandtell/2013/10/larry_fessenden_on_birth_of_th.php?page=2



Larry Fessenden on Birth of the Living Dead

By Cory Casciato Wed., Oct. 23 2013

The zombification of America got its start in 1968, when George A. Romero and a bunch of his friends and colleagues released *Night of the Living Dead*, the scrappy little horror movie that could not only serve as patient zero in the ongoing pop-cultural zombie apocalypse, it also revolutionized horror as a genre and marked the birth of a new era in independent filmmaking. Now, 45 years later, *Birth of the Living Dead* (opening Friday, October 25. at the Sie FilmCenter) shines a light on the film's creation, the turbulent world that it was born into and its enduring influence to this day, both within the zombie genre and in the larger world. We spoke with executive producer Larry Fessenden about what to expect from the doc, how it came to be and why *Night of the Living Dead* still has such an impact.

Westword: *Let's start with how you came to be involved with this project, and what your role was as executive producer.*

Larry Fessenden: Ah yes, of course, it has many implications. In my case, Rob Kuhns, the director, invited me to do an interview about *Night of the Living Dead* for his documentary. So I went in and pontificated about the movie and my affection for it. I've always cited it as my favorite horror movie, for various reasons.

I did the interview, then Rob followed up and said, "Do you want to see the cut?" I watched it and I enjoyed it thoroughly. I really loved the mission of his film, putting *Night of the Living Dead* in a historical context, so I just got involved. I offered him a few more names of interviews that I thought would help flesh out the direction he was going, and I found him the illustrator who did the poster and helped tell the story in the film. I helped him with the mix and helped him finish, just became a partner to it. So, executive producer can mean many things -- sometimes it's the guy with the money, sometimes it's the guy with the little bit of help that can get a film finished.

Were there interviews you wanted to get for the film that you were unable to get?

Well, look, I think with a film like this, of course you can wish for bigger and bigger names. You can wish for Frank Darabont, Guillermo del Toro, all the thoughtful horror guys out there. But I think actually, we got the flavor he was looking for. Elvis Mitchell came in and offered a perspective ... we didn't even know he was that fond of the movie. It was really fun when we discovered it was a seminal film for him.

Then Jason Zinoman has written a wonderful book called *Shock Value* and you couldn't hope for a more scholarly, thoughtful guy. So he was an interesting interview. Of course, you can picture a movie like this with even bigger names, but I think the names that Rob got fulfilled the mission.

On that note, the material with George Romero is fantastic and obviously the backbone of the film, but none of the other principals from Night were involved. Why was that?

Rob had approached some of these guys -- [John] Russo -- and my impression is that they were making *Another One for the Fire*, one of the docs they were involved in, and a well-liked, well-known doc on this topic. I think they felt like, "Look, we're already doing one, we don't need to get involved in yours." That was way back in the beginning, when Rob was just piecing things together. I think it was more happenstance than anything.

Obviously Duane Jones was no longer with us. That would have been great. Ironically, we met Duane's sister recently, and she would have been an interesting interview for the movie. She certainly made herself available to us for a special screening of the film. The thing with movies is there's a strange sense of circumstances that combine to be the movie that it actually is. I'm sure he would have loved to interview those guys, but it just didn't happen.

The film does an excellent job drawing attention to some of the dynamics that younger audiences probably overlook, as far as the turbulent times in America and what was going on around the film. How did you approach that?

I know that the agenda of the movie, they were really setting out to try to bring out the immediacy and almost shock of the first viewing of that movie. So there's a lot of time spent setting the stage, what was happening politically and culturally so that a modern viewer can really appreciate how startling this film was when it came out. I think that is very much the agenda and that's why there is quite a bit of time talking about Duane Jones and the racial tensions that were all over in our nation in 1968 and how casting a black dude to be a hero -- and more importantly not to speak about it, to just let it unfold -- was very startling at the time.

Now, it's something you would see. You'd see Denzel Washington, no one would be saying, "What are you doing here, Mr. Black Man?" But in those days it was very unusual, and not to talk about it was stranger still. Most films with a racial component, there was a great deal of hand-wringing, trying to make it clear to an audience the role of a Sidney Poitier in a film, for example.

On a similar note, the juxtaposition of some of the newsreel footage of race riots and Vietnam with shots from the film make another element clear. It was eye-opening how similar they looked.

I think that's the power of the documentary. You really see -- you're taken back to the handheld footage of Vietnam, then you cut to Romero's shots of the zombies and you really realize the immediacy. The same with the race riots, and how shocking it looks. As he points out, seeing those German shepherds going across a field -- these were images that really had resonance to the nation at the time. They sort of suggested the trouble in the streets, and the violence in Vietnam.

I think it's also just seeing 16mm footage and it feels handheld and really kind of immediate. That was the other thing, I think maybe if you see newsreel footage like that and it's cut in with Romero's footage, you see how immediate the film felt. It wasn't staged like a Vincent Price movie or a Universal picture, where the monsters were sort of quaint by then, in comparison to what was happening. That's the thing that I think Rob was going for by intercutting all those elements.

He also does a good job explaining how revolutionary the story structure was at the time, with it just picking up as a slice of life that quickly turns dark. Horror movies like that are more common now, and it's not obvious to modern audiences how unusual that was at the time.

Another thing I like about it, is it's just one night. I mean, that's certainly been done before and after, but it gives it a simplicity and almost a unity of time, where you're almost seeing everything in real time. Every little decision: "Well, let's try to go out the back door this time." or "Let's board up the windows this time." I still think that's resonant, and you see a lot of new films screw that kind of thing up.

I think the acting is a little stiff and so on, but I think the movie still has a strange power. The black and white just makes it feel creepy. There's some goofy stuff -- Romero himself makes fun of his special effects at times, just appallingly awful -- but there's a mood in the whole film that I think holds up. Of course, because I still recall how I felt when I saw it. I showed it to my thirteen-year-old who likes the occasional zombie movie and he was unable to see its merits. [Laughs.] He was respectful to me, but it was kind of like, "Nah, I don't think so."

Are there any amusing or interesting anecdotes you'd like to share from the production of the film?

[Laughs.] Well, no. Honestly, on a doc, you have the interviews, and those were all done by Rob and I wasn't even present for the interviews I set up. I know they spent three days with George Romero and that was spectacular and I'll tell you that's there lots of great additional footage that they'll be trotting out on the DVD. Just wonderful stories about his youth, growing up... Romero is clearly the heart and soul of the movie, and there's plenty more of that as well.

The other thing that I found, which is not an essential part of the movie, but it's certainly a strange little departure, is the teacher who uses [*Night*] to teach inner-city kids. [Laughs.] I met that guy and he was my web designer for a while and I just couldn't believe that he was doing that with those kids. I told the director, Rob, that maybe he should go up and get some of this footage. It just seemed to stand in such contrast to Roger Ebert's lament that the poor children who saw this film would be incapable of dealing with the imagery. Well, here we have children half the age seeing the movie and sort of cheering along - - although they have some poignant things to say. That was just another element that I thought would be interesting, and Rob stuck with it and put it in the movie.

What would you say to new-school zombie fans, who maybe had something like The Walking Dead or Zombieland as their intro to the genre, as far as the doc and why it -- and Night of the Living Dead itself -- is worth their time?

Well, without being too parental, I'd say it's really important to know where stuff comes from. This is one occasion where there's an absolute, definitive origin of all the zombie movies and all the zombie culture that we live with. And it's funny! And it's a history lesson without feeling like a history lesson. So, kids, 75 minutes -- why not? It's a good time. [Laughs.]

That would be my pitch. It's got a lot going on. You learn about the '60s, which is not that far in the past, but far enough that it might seem hard to understand. And you spend some time with this wonderful guy who was cool enough to make movies on his own, without the system. Then you learn that one man can make a huge difference, all by himself. Well, not by himself, but with a team of pals. I think it's a lesson in many ways.

<http://my.firedoglake.com/ssonenstein/2013/10/22/race-revolution-and-zombies-come-to-life-in-new-documentary-birth-of-the-living-dead/>



Race, Revolution, & Zombies come to life in new doc: “Birth of the Living Dead”

By: Shannon Sonenstein

Tuesday October 22, 2013

Birth of the Living Dead, a new documentary on the cult classic Night of the Living Dead (NOTLD), begins arriving in movie theaters in 20 cities across the country this month, just in time for Halloween. NOTLD, which was directed by George Romero in 1968, remains one of the most influential horror films of all time, famous for the invention of modern-day zombies. Birth of the Living Dead, reminds viewers that NOTLD was also groundbreaking for its social and political undertones. Part making-of movie and part cultural decoder, Birth brings to life for today’s audiences the revolutionary significance of NOTLD, illuminating how this independent, low-budget, horror film became an accidental icon of the counterculture.

“NOTLD is a movie that the hippies and the demonstrators would see to get a sense of sticking it to the man,” Birth’s director, Rob Kuhns explains to me. I catch up with Rob by phone. He’s in a hotel room in Atlanta this morning, on the road with Birth and pretty much in a different city every night for the next two weeks. We talk before he heads off to the next screening in Milledgeville, GA. He tells me, “They schedule you within an inch of your life so we are constantly moving, but it’s a great opportunity to go to all of these places, make direct contact with audiences, and have conversations.”

Let’s start by acknowledging that making a documentary is a huge labor of love. What drove you to want to tell the story of a horror film that was made 45 years ago and why was it important for your documentary to explore the social/political context that influenced NOTLD?

I guess I’ll go back to 1983 when I saw NOTLD for the first time in a midnight show in NY; it just knocked me to my core. In 2005, I read about the making of NOTLD, which is this wonderful underdog story. These people from Pittsburgh who were scraping by making commercials decided they wanted to make a feature film. To call it a long shot is a massive understatement. The whole idea of an independent film was like, what are you talking about? No one had heard of such a thing. Around the time I was reading this, I got hired to work on Moyers and Company, a weekly TV show. Bill Moyers had been the press secretary for Lyndon Johnson so I kind of got steeped in that part of history and had access to all of this archival footage and one thing led to another ... Delving into the social/political context of NOTLD became this big, fat, juicy theme. Horror is very much ghettoized; people don’t look at it as a legitimate art form, so I think part of me was motivated to give horror a legitimacy that a lot of people don’t.

What was the first specific “aha” moment when you realized that Birth needed to tell a political/social story as much as a filmmaking one?

The most obvious moment was seeing footage of the National Guard responding to race rebellions in the '60s and footage of cops pushing around African Americans. Just seeing that bullying was striking. There was a clear parallel between seeing these cops bullying civilians and the posse in *NOTLD* shooting people in the face. In the movie they're killing zombies of course, but it's really a creepy image to see what looks like a lynch mob shooting grandmothers down. I can't help but think that Romero and his colleagues were watching this stuff and responding to the imagery through the way they executed their film.

Duane Jones passed away in 1988; if you'd had the chance to interview him for *Birth* about his experience portraying Ben what would you have asked him?

I'd ask what the experience was like for him. Romero represents Duane in some of his interview saying that Duane confronted him and said, "I can't do this stuff. I can't kill a white guy. I can't slap a white woman; this stuff is going to have consequences." Duane ended up going through with it because Romero was insistent on not changing the script and not having race as an issue. Romero now questions if he should have done that. I'd be curious to ask Duane, how would you have changed the script? What would the relationships in the film be like if race was addressed as an issue for these people trapped and being pursued by zombies? How do you think that would play out? It would be an unbelievable opportunity to ask that.

***Birth* ends with the line, "There's really a fragility to our society, and you realize- I must guard it, I must be vigilant. Then you get into why horror stories can actually have a positive message if you will, a positive effect, which is to say here is a cautionary tale; do not take anything for granted. Because one day a zombie may wander up and you may make fun of the person who is afraid but they could be right and things could go from bad to worse." Talk about the choice to end your film on this idea.**

All of the things that kept us safe were being questioned in 1968 in *NOTLD* and the movies that came after. I thought that this statement worked as a big idea ending and lent itself to the mission of trying to de-ghettoize horror. Horror can have a positive effect on our society and should be looked at as a legitimate art form that is crucially subversive, making us question things in ways that are healthy and very powerful.

Reviews:

http://seattletimes.com/html/entertainment/2022066851_livingdeadxml.html

The Seattle Times

'Birth of the Living Dead': the rise of an influential classic

A review of "Birth of the Living Dead," a documentary about the enduring social, political and pop-cultural influence of George Romero's 1968 zombie classic "Night of the Living Dead."

By [Jeff Shannon](#)

It's only fitting that "Birth of the Living Dead" is playing at the University District's Grand Illusion as Halloween draws near. It's there that George Romero's classic, prototypical zombie film "Night of the Living Dead," has played every year for decades in late October, one of Seattle's longest-running movie traditions.

As its title suggests, "Birth" sets out to chronicle the origins of Romero's 1968 film, but what first appears to be a standard "making of" feature becomes a more ambitious combination of historical perspective and sociopolitical commentary. Romero himself is the film's highlight, appearing relaxed and funny in an entertaining interview. But with only one exception (a posthumous after-credits tribute to "graveyard zombie" Bill Hinzman), none of the film's cast members are interviewed.

Instead, director Rob Kuhns applies experience from working on PBS' "Moyers & Company" to place "Night of the Living Dead" in the tumultuous context of 1968, focusing on racial tensions and Romero's provocative, matter-of-fact casting of an African American (the late Duane Jones) in "Night's" lead role. By foregoing any mention of race, Romero assured that "Night," which was initially rejected by most critics, would ultimately be recognized as an influential classic.

In addition to scenes of students enthusiastically responding to "Night of the Living Dead" in a classroom context, Kuhns also includes personal recollections from critics Elvis Mitchell and Mark Harris, "The Walking Dead" producer Gale Ann Hurd, horror director Larry Fessenden and others. Some choice production details (like "Night's" 1967 budget of \$114,000) will engage trivia buffs; and, by placing Romero's film at the epicenter of its volatile era, "Birth of the Living Dead" pays wide-ranging tribute to an enduring pop-cultural milestone.

[http://twitchfilm.com/2013/10/review-birth-of-the-living-dead-great-doc-to-revive-and-learn-more-about-romeros-1968-classic.html?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+TwitchEverything+\(Twitch\)](http://twitchfilm.com/2013/10/review-birth-of-the-living-dead-great-doc-to-revive-and-learn-more-about-romeros-1968-classic.html?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+TwitchEverything+(Twitch))



Review: BIRTH OF THE LIVING DEAD, A Great Doc To Revive And Learn More About Romero's 1968 Classic

Eric Ortiz Garcia

While hard-core fans of George A. Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* might not learn anything new with Rob Kuhns' 75-minute doc *Birth of the Living Dead*, dare I say anyone with an interest in filmmaking will have a great time watching it.

For connoisseurs, Kuhns offers a bunch of interviews with fellow experts who vividly revive the quintessential zombie film, while for newcomers there's a detailed account on how *Night of the Living Dead* was made and the impact it caused, with the man Romero himself open to tell his stories.

Birth of the Living Dead is, at first sight, a making-of documentary, beginning when Romero was doing commercials in Pittsburgh together with people that eventually helped, in one way or another, for the creation of the 1968 classic. It offers a pure guerrilla filmmaking tale with Romero recalling the pre-production and the filming, all adorned with a series of animated scenes by Gary Pullin (Ghouliah Gary), which bring freshness to the screen.

The doc lacks interviews with actors or crew involved in the shooting, though Romero never forgets them and ultimately their recognition is intact. Aside from Romero's, the film's original interviews were made to *Night of the Living Dead* enthusiasts, such as Larry Fessenden and Elvis Mitchell. They never hesitate when it comes to remember the film. It is clear that Fessenden, for instance, has seen it countless times as he can recreate sequences exactly as they are.

Certainly, if you haven't seen *Night of the Living Dead* you don't want to watch this doc first as everything, including the (brilliant) ending, is explicitly discussed. For moments, *Birth of the Living Dead* gets too descriptive but it is fun to witness the aficionados' excitement when talking about Romero's film and, after all, they also give us personal experiences (Mitchell remembers how it was watching it as a kid), context and good film analysis.

The late Duane Jones' character Ben is especially explored and here's the deal: you can find elsewhere, say other documentaries on the subject, or reviews, discussions of what it meant to have an African American protagonist like Ben back in the late sixties, nevertheless *Birth of the Living Dead* offers such a fun and complete revision that's just impossible to dismiss as "something we have seen before." We get to fully understand the context and we do it smiling, thanks to, for example, of the awesome

connections drawn between Ben, Sidney Poitier (In the Heat of the Night, Guess Who's Coming to Dinner) and the blaxploitation leading characters such as John Shaft.

Birth of the Living Dead is terrific for why and how the mentioned zombie flick got huge. If you don't know much about this, prepare to be truly surprised and, why not inspired... since this particular story is pretty neat, and is perhaps the best in terms of influential guerrilla filmmaking. It is no doubt a doc filled with nostalgia evoking the times of midnight movies and even Roger Ebert's film criticism. In the end, Kuhns' love letter to Romero's masterpiece is a welcome and fresh addition to our history of the modern screen zombie.

<http://www.laweekly.com/movies/birth-of-the-living-dead-year-of-the-living-dead-2219990/>



Birth of the Living Dead (Year of the Living Dead)

Night of the Living Dead, George A. Romero's 1968 zombie flick classic, has long been the subject of intense critical analysis laying bare its rich social and political commentary. Romero not only set in motion the zombie fetish that thrives globally today, but created a film that simultaneously captured the late-'60s zeitgeist and created a pop-cultural template still used to critique the ills that gird the status quo. With that in mind, a lot of the information and insights that documentary filmmaker Rob Kuhns presents in Birth of the Living Dead won't be news for longtime scholars (academics or laypersons) of the film. That Night was inspired by Richard Matheson's seminal 1954 novel I Am Legend, that it was groundbreaking in the way it used its African-American lead actor, and that it was a critique of mainstream America's somnambulism leading up to the Vietnam war and civil rights turmoil are all already well known. What distinguishes this doc from much of the tedious critical prose Romero has inspired is the fan-boy and fan-girl ardor that fuels its smarts--both behind and in front of the camera. Interview subjects, from producer Gale Anne Hurd (who says she drew heavily from the film in creating the cable TV hit The Walking Dead) to various film scholars, directors, and critics, all key their commentary into the film's visceral power and the unpretentious intelligence behind it. That includes a glorious bit discussing how Sidney Poitier's blackness was being used in Hollywood at the time, and how Night upended the protocol. It's the anecdotes and remembrances of Romero-- a 27-year-old college dropout losing his movie-making cherry with Night-- that make the film, though. An utterly charming figure who often ends his sentences with "man," he fills in behind-the-scenes tales that likely haven't been heard by many before, and they are riveting; his story of the film's copyright battle is jaw-dropping.

Ernest Hardy

<http://www.stageandcinema.com/2013/10/23/birth-of-the-living-dead/>



Documentary Film Review: BIRTH OF THE LIVING DEAD (directed by Rob Kuhns)

DEATH OF AN ERA, BIRTH OF A GENRE by JASON ROHRER on OCTOBER 23, 2013

Rob Kuhns' Birth of the Living Dead is in part a making-of documentary, and a good one, about the revolutionary 1968 zombie picture Night of the Living Dead. It's also a sharp essay celebrating the original George Romero film in historical political context. It only plays through Thursday at the Arena Cinema, so if you want to see it on a big screen, you've got to move. We had as good a time as I've had at a movie lately, the other two people and I. It's a crime more people aren't coming to enjoy this as a shared event rather than a lonely VOD vigil.

An illustration of George Romero editing his seminal 1968 film NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD, as seen in Rob Kuhns' documentary BIRTH OF THE LIVING DEAD. With humor and pathos, Birth places its subject squarely in the gathering horror of the society that spawned it, an America disillusioned and angry at the grim end of the sixties. Night came out the year Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy were shot, the year of race riots in many cities frustrated by the promises of civil rights, after a decade that hadn't resulted in the peace and love a lot of people expected. It was the year of the Tet Offensive and the Chicago Democratic Convention. And come January, Richard Nixon would be president.

Into this, a movie composed of groundbreaking elements including an epidemic of unexplained, unstoppable violence; a black protagonist (Duane Jones) whose race is never referred to, though he is the only black character; and "good guys" who looked as if they had walked out of a TV news segment about a cross-burning. Critics hated it; Vincent Canby was snide, and Roger Ebert was scandalized (Ebert later recanted his pan). But it became a huge hit, first on the grindhouse circuit and, after discovery by (who else) the French, in Europe. It played to standing-room only crowds at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City. And it spawned arguably the most popular horror genre of the second half of the twentieth century, and for sheer number of titles at least tying vampire movies for championship of the first thirteen years of the twenty-first.

Night was made by a first-feature team led by George A. Romero, who had been shooting and editing commercials in Pittsburgh and had to buy a 35 mm camera for a prestigious gig. Thinking of producing a feature, he wrote the screenplay for a Bergmanesque medieval romance called Whine of the Fawn before deciding to go for something more commercial. One shudders at the what if. The story of these guerrilla filmmakers and the impact they've had on their medium is told by articulate, invested filmmakers such as Larry Fessenden (Wendigo), Gale Ann Hurd (The Terminator, The Walking Dead) and Mr. Romero himself, as well as critics, historians, teachers, and students. All of them serve Mr. Kuhns' persuasive argument that the joys of films about films need not be limited to homage and recaps and stand-offish neutrality; that nonfiction films can investigate and prove artistic theses.



'Birth of the Living Dead,' a Review; or, Walkers in Memphis: Filmmakers Bring Their Z-Doc to the M-Town

By John Beifuss

The impact of George A. Romero's low-budget 1968 masterpiece "Night of the Living Dead" on the next 45 years of not just popular but general culture is difficult to exaggerate. The movie is the Bo Diddley beat of horror -- the iteration that launched a million copycats.

Ferocious, independent, political, even revolutionary, Romero's Pittsburgh-based production had its origins in cheap B-movies and disreputable EC comic books, yet it's a legitimate successor to such artful masterworks as "Psycho" and "Bonnie and Clyde"; a (literal) blood brother to "The Wild Bunch" and "Taxi Driver"; and as much a product of the Vietnam War and the civil rights unrest of its era as the Rolling Stones' "Sympathy for the Devil" or Walter Cronkite's nightly news reports. With their menacing police dogs and lynch- mob mentality, the redneck officers and vigilantes in Romero's film owed less to the torch-wielding villagers in a "Frankenstein" sequel than to the police enforcers in Bull Connor's Birmingham.

Romero's movie "introduced the world to a new kind of monster, the flesh-eating zombie," in the words of the narration that accompanies "Birth of the Living Dead," a vivid and valuable documentary about the production and significance of "Night of the Living Dead" that screens at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday (Oct. 16) at Malco's Studio on the Square. The documentary is the second in a more or less monthly screening series dubbed "The Southern Circuit Tour of Independent Filmmakers," presented locally by Indie Memphis. "Birth" director Rob Kuhns and producer Esther Cassidy will attend, to introduce their film and to answer questions afterward.

With new interviews, archival material that includes vintage footage from movies and TV newscasts, and drawings by cartoonist Gary Pullin, "Birth of the Living Dead" makes the case that introducing the world to "a new kind of monster" is not necessarily a minor achievement. The movie reminds us of just how indestructible and indeed ubiquitous "the flesh-eating zombie" has become: The concept is now as familiar as that of the vampire or werewolf, and is perhaps even more useful as a metaphor for such anxieties as loss of identity, the threat of a mass enemy, the spread of an incurable epidemic, social collapse and doomsday.

Look around. The so-called "zombie apocalypse" is not just with us in cinemas ("World War Z"), video games ("Resident Evil"), TV shows ("The Walking Dead," described by AMC as "the most-watched drama" in "cable history"), bookstores ("Pride and Prejudice and Zombies") and participatory spectacle

(Memphis is one of many city's that hosts a public "zombie walk"); it also has proved irresistible to officialdom. Government entities that created much-publicized tongue-in-cheek exercises and blog posts inspired by the threat of a zombie epidemic include the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Centers for Disease Control and the Department of Homeland Security.

"Birth of the Living Dead" enlists several notable talking heads to testify to the importance of "Night of the Living Dead" (no, the heads aren't severed). Among the shocker's champions are producer Gale Anne Hurd ("Aliens," "The Walking Dead"); author Mark Harris ("Pictures at a Revolution: Five Movies and the Birth of the New Hollywood"); Bill Hinzman, the "graveyard ghoul" from the Romero film who has become a horror convention celebrity; indie horror director Larry Fessenden, one of the doc's executive producers; and film critic Elvis Mitchell, who says "Night of the Living Dead" sometimes "almost plays like Beckett," as people with "no place to go" reveal their true, often unattractive selves.

We also hear at length from Romero, a "27-year-old college dropout from the Bronx" (according to the documentary) who turned to zombies after failing to find financing for a script titled "Whine of the Faun," which the director describes as "Bergmanesque."

The documentary examines the Romero movie's innovations -- in particular, the casting of black actor Duane Jones as the story's non-"accommodationist" hero -- while also providing some nuts-and-bolts insight into its shoestring production. Freeze frames identify various zombies by their off-screen job titles; for example, multitasking Marilyn Eastman, who was an investor in the film, not only played the key character of "Helen Cooper," but she also supervised wardrobe and makeup and portrayed the famous ghoul who eats an insect off a tree.

In 1967, when "Night of the Living Dead" was shot, most of the cast and crew already were collaborators or acquaintances thanks to Romero's company, The Latent Image, which produced commercials and educational films in Pittsburgh. The documentary includes tantalizing footage from the director's pre-fame work for Iron City and Duke beers, as well as clips from "Mr. Rogers Gets a Tonsillectomy," a segment created for the Pittsburgh-based public television children's program, "Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood," that "remains one of the scariest movies I've ever done," Romero claims. (The footage suggests he's only half-joking.)

"Birth of the Living Dead" reminds us that "Night of the Living Dead" -- a movie that in 1999 was added to the Library of Congress' National Film Registry, a hall of fame for films deemed "culturally, historically or aesthetically significant" -- was reviled or ignored by critics on its initial release. (Clueless exhibitors sometimes paired it with harmless G-rated monster movies for kiddie matinee shows, a situation that prompted Roger Ebert's famous 1969 article about the film, which prompted national alarm when it was reprinted in Reader's Digest. "I felt real terror in that neighborhood theater last Saturday afternoon," Ebert wrote. "I saw kids who had no resources they could draw upon to protect themselves from the dread and fear they felt.")

The documentary also explains the copyright snafu that has prevented Romero and his partners from sharing in the millions in revenue produced by the movie. However, the documentary does not deal with

Romero's directorial typecasting: Five of the 14 features he has completed since "Night" have been "living dead" movies, including all three of the films he made during the past decade.

Romero may have reason to be bitter or frustrated by this association, but if so, the 73-year-old director doesn't show it. Instead, he comes across as a cynical yet happy hippie uncle of horror, still suspicious of The Man and still fond of his zombies. Asked if he ever feels an obligation to cheer rather than to scare audiences, Romero responds that people who need something sweet while watching his movies need only walk to the theater lobby: "There's always the refreshment stand."

<http://www.pghcitypaper.com/pittsburgh/birth-of-the-living-dead/Content?oid=1703201>



Birth of the Living Dead

A doc looks at the making of *Night of the Living Dead*, and its lasting influence by Al Hoff

Think you know everything about George Romero's 1968 horror film *Night of the Living Dead*? Even the most diehard fan will probably learn something in this affectionate doc from Rob Kuhns that looks at how the zombie classic was made, what movie-making conventions it broke, how it resonated with audiences upon release, and what influence it had on future films. Kuhns interviews Romero extensively, and film critics and other interested parties (such as Gale Ann Hurd, executive producer of TV's *Walking Dead*) help provide context. Of particular interest is how *Dead* uncannily tapped into late-1960s anxieties about race, authority and once-stable institutions.

http://www.oregonlive.com/movies/index.ssf/2013/10/birth_of_the_living_dead_the_s.html



'Birth of the Living Dead,' the secret origins of a zombie original: Indie & art house films

DVD bonus features have made me nearly immune to making-of documentaries, so I consider it high praise to say "Birth of the Living Dead," the new study on George A. Romero's zombie original "Night of the Living Dead," is an insightful good time.

Romero joins a host of distinguished commentators to reanimate the history of how a scrappy team of Pittsburgh professionals came together to make "Night of the Living Dead" in the late 1960s.

More fascinating than even the production details is the image director Rob Kuhns paints of the social climate that informed Romero's gruesome narrative. The subtext he uncovers is eye opening.

At 73, Romero himself is still a hoot, making me think a full documentary on the man and his career is long overdue.

<http://www.portlandmercury.com/portland/birth-of-the-living-dead/Film?oid=10827555>



Birth of the Living Dead

George A. Romero invented shambling, guts-gobbling zombies as we know them with his 1968 classic *Night of the Living Dead*. I'm sure your nightmares thank him. Documentarian Rob Kuhns interviews the living-dead legend and chronicles how Romero's film came to be—including stories about Romero gathering pals from *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* as his production crew, and getting advertisers from his commercial film studio to play zombies at an abandoned farmhouse. It's a fascinating film that not only covers *Night of the Living Dead's* evergreen themes like race, war, and zombie apocalypses, but also provides a twinkly eyed portrait of Romero.

by Courtney Ferguson



Birth of the Living Dead: How a Zombie Classic Came to Be

By Brian Miller Tue., Oct 15 2013

Runs Fri., Oct. 18–Thurs., Oct. 24 at Grand Illusion. Not rated. 76 minutes.

George A. Romero's 1968 zombie classic *Night of the Living Dead*—also being screened at 10 p.m. Friday and Saturday—is a one-off, DIY indie phenomenon with dozens of more profitable heirs. Without it there would be no *28 Days Later*, no *Walking Dead*, no cheerful zombie walks or costume parties. Rob Kuhns' affectionate new tribute documentary makes all those points and then some, prominently featuring Romero and praising his Pittsburgh collaborators, though it's weaker on legacy than on the grainy origin story.

Romero came out of commercials and industrial films, and I'd like to see more of the cheeky TV spots shown here. Only 27 when he gathered local investors—many of them doubling as crew and cast—to shoot the film, he was both an entrepreneur and a product of charged political times. One of the inspirations for his script turns out to have been Richard Matheson's dystopic sci-fi novel *I Am Legend*, which totally makes sense. "There was a good deal of anger," he says today. "Mostly that the '60s didn't work. We thought we had changed the world. And all of a sudden, it wasn't any better."

Work on the film began in 1967, and Romero could never have predicted that its October '68 release would so closely follow the Tet Offensive and the assassinations of Martin Luther King and Robert F. Kennedy. Truly it seemed the world was going to hell, which made *Night of the Living Dead* a movie for its times. Kuhns is a veteran editor, and he expertly stitches together TV and newsreel footage from the era, Romero's recollections, clips and stills from *NLD*, and plaudits from today's zombie masters (including *Walking Dead* producer Gale Anne Hurd). However, these encomiums pile up like cordwood, and Kuhns gets sidetracked by a visit to a Bronx middle school where the teacher uses *NLD* as a teaching aid to . . . well, maybe he didn't have a lesson plan that day, but the kids love it.

Former New York Times critic Elvis Mitchell here compares *NLD*'s mood to Beckett, and I think that's apt. Helplessness and despair were not the qualities one usually associated with midnight movies. *NLD*'s terror is self-aware ("They're coming to get you, Barbara . . ."), but the squirming and laughter eventually give way to blank horror and an ending Mitchell correctly calls "honest." I wish *Birth of the Living Dead* delved more into Hollywood's new zombie economics (like how Romero lost the copyright with a retitling of *NLD*), but this is a film that all Romero's fans will want to see.

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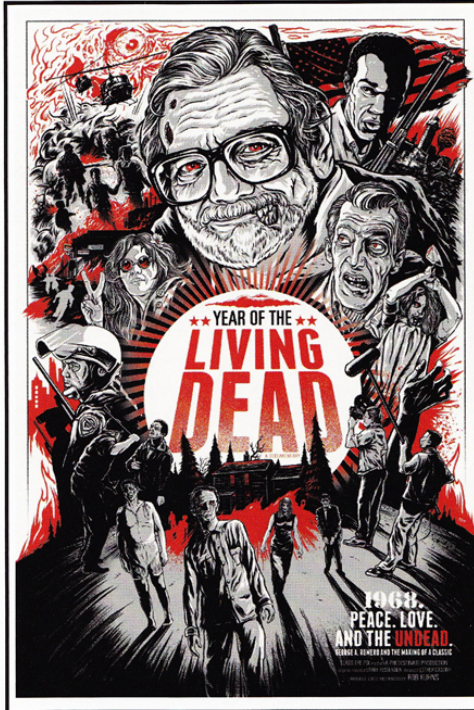
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When *Night of the Living Dead* opened in 1968, it did more than invent a new horror subgenre; it demonstrated that a fright film could pointedly reflect and ruthlessly comment on the times in which it was made. As much as its groundbreaking, unrelenting terror, that quality has allowed it to endure over the decades, winning new fans every generation—including documentarian Rob Kuhns, who examines *Night's* legacy in his upcoming *Year of the Living Dead*.

Kuhns, who first discovered *Night* while a student at New York University's film school in the early 1980s, initially intended *Year* to be a celebration of George A. Romero and his team's "little movie that could." After he and his wife/producing partner Esther Cassidy spent two days in Toronto interviewing the filmmaker, and he then plunged into editing, his point of view changed.

"In my spare time, I started a new job as an editor for *Bill Moyers Journal*, a weekly interview and news-analysis series on PBS," Kuhns recalls. "Moyers was the White House press secretary for Lyndon Johnson in the late '60s, and would frequently refer to that era in the show. I ended up getting steeped in that part of our history—the race rebellions across the country, the Vietnam War—and became fascinated thinking of Romero and his collaborators making this film about the world coming to an end at a historic time of enormous upheaval. *Night* started revealing itself as a living document of exactly the period in which it was made.

"YEAR," FEAR AND HISTORY



"I started to weave in this history, and the documentary evolved into something much richer than the 'making of' I originally envisioned," he continues. "In the end, I wanted to put *Night* in a historical context and show today's viewers the cultural landscape it came out of. I wanted to present it as both an audacious indie film that bucked Hollywood and an

expression of the counterculture. While I certainly hope Romero and zombie fans will dig this movie, I'm very much hoping it will also appeal to a mainstream audience—people who might be surprised how meaningful a horror film can be."

To that end, Kuhns found a number of other voices to speak for *Night's* significance. These include filmmakers Gale Anne Hurd (who has contributed to its legacy with *The Walking Dead*) and Larry Fessenden, who signed on as executive producer. "I have always been a fan of

David Skal's book *The Monster Show*, which places 100 years of horror films in the greater context of U.S. history, showing how the genre is an expression of the nation's anxieties," Fessenden says. "Rob's film does that with Romero's classic, and you can really feel how *Night of the Living Dead* was of its time, and ahead of its time."

Others who appear in *Year* include Mark Harris, author of the '68-cinema study *Pictures at a Revolution*, *Shock Value* author Jason Zinoman and Chiz Schultz, producer of *Ganja and Hess*, which starred *Night* hero Duane Jones. "Chiz discusses how revolutionary it was to not only cast a black actor, Duane Jones, in the lead, but to never mention his race once in the script. He also produced Harry Belafonte's TV specials in the late '60s, and was a first-hand witness to the racism of the time. In the rehearsal for one of Belafonte's shows, singer Petula Clark touched Belafonte's arm, which caused a sponsor to demand there be no physical contact between them. Race and the casting of Jones is a major theme, and is discussed by all of the interviewees."

Night itself became a subject of controversy after Roger Ebert, in an article for the

Chicago Sun-Times—also reprinted in *Reader's Digest*—reacted with horror that young children were being dropped off by their parents to see such a graphic, terrifying movie. (Ebert has clarified since that the piece wasn't intended as an attack on the film itself, which he admires.) One section of *Year of the Living Dead* reveals how times have changed:

"We shot a sequence in the Bronx, where Romero grew up, at a summer literacy class for fifth and sixth graders taught by Christopher Cruz, a friend of Larry Fessenden's," reveals Kuhns, who is currently in post on *Year*. "He used *Night* and lessons in filmmaking to help teach these kids literacy skills, which was surprising enough. But what really surprised us was how these kids responded to *Night*. They wanted to see it again and again, especially the scene where little Karen Cooper slaughters her mother with a garden trowel. They loved discussing the zombie mythology, and the ethics of whether Ben should or should not have shot Harry Cooper near the end of the film. It was an amazing contrast to the kids Roger Ebert wrote about in 1968—when they watched the movie, it traumatized them for life. Clearly, the norms of our society, and the bars for what's acceptable, are significantly different."

—Michael Gingold

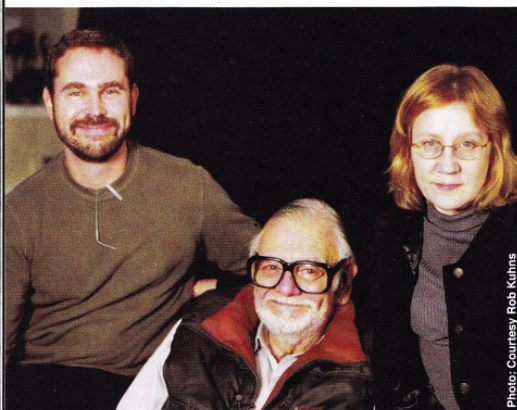


Photo: Courtesy Rob Kuhns

It was Rob Kuhns and Esther Cassidy's favorite *Year* when they spoke to the man who changed horror forever.

<http://www.geekenstein.com/birth-of-the-living-dead-review/>



Birth of the Living Dead Review

Posted on October 16, 2013 By Dustin Triplett

Contrary to popular belief, zombies aren't brought to life from infected reanimated corpses; no, they are born! Bursting from the loins of a college dropout with high ambitions for his unprecedented visions, Night of the Living Dead created a genre of movies that have since become cult classics and formed a beloved genre that is showing no signs of slowing down today.

Birth of the Living Dead chronicles the story of how George A. Romero came to direct Night of the Living Dead and brought his vision into the minds and hearts of a generation. Some documentaries have touched on the subject before, but none have gone as in depth and personal as Birth of the Living Dead, making it a must see for zombie fans.

Despite being a self-proclaimed zombie fanatic, I never enjoyed Night of the Living Dead. I know, I am the worst kind of person imaginable. Looking back, I think it was because I had been exposed to "modern" interpretations of zombies prior to viewing Night of the Living Dead. By today's standards, it simply doesn't hold up. I didn't think it would be a film a zombie fan could go back to and truly appreciate. I thought wrong.

Birth of the Living Dead shows Night of the Living Dead in a new light; a light that will make even the most biased naysayers start to appreciate the film for what it did and its powerful, forever lasting hold on film culture. It's truly amazing to see the conception of one of the most iconic films of all time. In its presentation, Birth is quite a simplistic documentary, but it's still executed flawlessly in what it's trying to do. Visually, it's a lot of people involved in the creation process sitting in front of black backgrounds, b-roll of the film, and various still frames, but that's all it needs to be to make the viewer feel engrossed.

Make no mistake; Birth of the Living Dead is about the origins and completion of George A. Romero's Night of the Living Dead and it's influence in the world of film, not about zombies in general. The focus on Romero's role in zombie culture may put off some viewers, but those looking for a peak inside Romero's mind and the creation process of the most iconic zombie movie of all time are going to be pleasantly surprised. Birth of the Living Dead introduces Night of the Living Dead to a new generation of zombie fans in the way they should be introduced to it.



There is no doubt that circa 2012, zombies are the new cool. The success of the comic turned basic cable TV hit *The Walking Dead* has contributed mightily to that but there is nobody with any sort of historical perspective at all who won't admit that without *Night at the Living Dead*, zombies would be relegated to a kind of horror film B-movie ghetto.

Romero was a young college dropout in Pittsburgh back in 1968 when he decided to make a movie on his own. He, like many other Pittsburgh-based filmmakers, worked on the children's television program *Mister Rogers Neighborhood* (one of Romero's vignettes, *Mr. Roger Gets a Tonsillectomy* is shown and I kid you not, it is one of the most terrifying things you will ever see) as well as local advertisements.

The movie was largely shot on a wing and a prayer with investors and local TV personalities appearing as actors, zombies and occasionally as technicians. It was shot on the fly and with an almost non-existent budget. It got little or no positive press mainly because it broke so many taboos – an African-American hero whose race is never commented upon in the film, children murdering and eating their parents, zombies chowing down on living, screaming victims.

Largely over time, the movie has grown from cult status into a cultural touchstone. Within the context of its time when race riots were running rampant, the counterculture was protesting the war in Vietnam with increasingly violent repression from the government in reprisal and a general distrust of the American dream of their parents by an entire generation of young people, *Night of the Living Dead* was almost inevitable – if Romero hadn't made it, someone else might well have made something like it. It's unlikely however that anyone else would have blown off Hollywood movie conventions as easily as Romero did; while he essentially claims he didn't know any better, I honestly believe that his innovations were done deliberately.

This documentary examines the film and its time, largely through interviews of critics, writers, academics and filmmakers (including Hurd, producer of *The Walking Dead*). There are also some nifty illustrated/animated sequences drawn by Gary Pullin that give the audience an insight into the production itself.

Because of the focus on a single film, Kuhns is able to drill down and really examine the movie's historical, political and cinematic influence and the implications it has had on modern society and movies, not to mention its continuing influence on American culture. Romero is a delightful interview whose engaging personality is such that you wouldn't mind watching two hours of talking head interviews with the man. Between the Romero interview and the illustrations as well as extensive footage from the movie itself and some archival footage of events of the day, the documentary is anything but dry. While those who don't like the original movie might find this dull, if they are into

history and social studies at all they will still find this fascinating. While the focus is definitely on Night of the Living Dead, you don't have to be an obsessive fanboy to appreciate Year of the Living Dead. If you are, however, you may just want to demand your local art house get a copy of the movie so that you can spend your nights wrapped up in this well-made and thoughtful analysis of one of the great movies of all time.

REASONS TO GO: Romero is an engaging storyteller. Filmmakers really drill down and don't just get backstage anecdotes but place the movie within the context of its time.

<http://www.dvdtalk.com/reviews/58572/year-of-the-living-dead/>



BIRTH OF THE LIVING DEAD

Review by Jason Bailey

In 1967, a 27-year-old college dropout and industrial filmmaker named George A. Romero assembled a ramshackle cast and crew of friends, associates, and clients, rented a farmhouse in the sticks, and made Night of the Living Dead--"this tiny little movie in Pittsburgh," notes historian Jason Zinoman, that "changed the world." That sounds like a tall claim for a low-budget horror picture, but in his new documentary Year of the Living Dead, director Rob Kuhns mounts a convincing case.

The film is part biography, part behind-the-scenes feature, and part sociological study. We're introduced to Romero, whose Pittsburgh production company made industrials, commercials, and even some of the outside-the-studio films on Mr. Rogers Neighborhood. (We get a glimpse of one, "Mr. Rogers Gets a Tonsillectomy," which Romero notes "remains one of the scariest movies I've ever done.") He initially wanted to make his feature filmmaking debut with a Bergman-esque art drama, but quickly realized that they'd be better off making a horror movie--something a little more commercial. They got that, all right.

The stories of how they scraped the movie together out of spit and scotch tape and ingenuity are fascinating, and Romero tells them well--much of Year of the Living Dead's first half is him holding court entertainingly, a grinning charmer with giant glasses and a hearty laugh. He's told these stories for decades, but he's not tired of them, and the doc also fills in some of the casual fan's lingering questions about the pictures's making and release (like how it ended up playing those kids' matinees, and the remarkable blunder that put it into the public domain). But that would make this a fine DVD featurette,

and little more. Kuhns pushes further, exploring *Night of the Living Dead* in its most compelling form: as a metaphor and commentary on then-current events.

Because those current vents have now become history, the filmmaker and his interview subjects provide extensive context for the film--the things we take for granted now, but which made it so revolutionary at that particular moment. He pulls together a marvelous trio of film writers to talk about the picture's environment and influence: the aforementioned Zinoman, who wrote last year's terrific *Shock Value*; Mark Harris, author of the brilliant chronicle *Pictures at a Revolution*; and the always insightful Elvis Mitchell.

Their discussion is wide-ranging, from the casting of African-American actor Duane Jones in the leading role as subtle subversion of both conventional treatment of black people in film and the Poitier factor, of the authenticity of the newscasts and the unnervingly real quality it lent the film, the influence of Vietnam War and Civil Rights imagery on the lean, pseudo-documentary look of the film. Much of the *Night* playbook became standard for not only horror films but mainstream storytelling in the decade that followed, but such elements as the enigmatic nature, the anything-goes morality, and the subversion of narrative exposition are here pinpointed as the innovations they were.

Night, and many of the great films of the 1970s that followed it, offered no comfort for the audience ("There's always the refreshment stand!" Romero counters cheerfully). As with many groundbreaking films, much of what it does has been so often duplicated that it's become hard to appreciate the source. *Night of the Living Dead* has been separated from its time, and one of the finest qualities of *Year of the Living Dead* is how expertly it positions the picture back within that framework. It's a slender effort that doesn't overstay its welcome (and even at that, a couple of its digressions--like the visits to a Bronx classroom--don't really work). Its aim is simple: to trace the history of this remarkable film, and to remind us of how truly original it was. Mission accomplished.

Previews:

<http://www.nypl.org/locations/tid/64/node/219182>



Films at the Schomburg: *Birth of the Living Dead*

In 1968 a young college drop-out named George A. Romero directed "Night of the Living Dead," a low budget horror film that shocked the world, became an icon of the counterculture, and spawned a billion dollar zombie industry that continues to this day.

Rob Kuhns' documentary places world-renowned horror film, Romero's *Night of the Living Dead*, in its historical context with archival footage of the horrors of the Vietnam war and race rebellions at home combined with iconic music from the 60s. Following the screening, Kuhns will moderate a talk back with Sam Pollard, Larry Fessenden and Marva Jones Brooks.

This screening is presented as a special sneak preview screening and "Birth of the Living Dead" will premiere at the IFC Center Theater on November 6th, 2013.

<http://horrornews.net/75788/witness-the-birth-of-the-living-dead-this-fall/>



Witness The BIRTH OF THE LIVING DEAD This Fall

Posted on 08/13/2013 by Dave Dreher [Leave a Comment](#) or [Post Review](#)

Those of you in the NYC area are in for a treat this fall when the IFC Center welcomes the premiere of BIRTH OF THE LIVING DEAD a brand new documentary about the Romero class NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD but this is not your standard documentary, this is something different, something special. As always seems to be the case, the press release holds all the info you could possibly wrap your head around so read on:

Right now the only place you'll be able to see this is at the IFC Center beginning Nov. 6th but fear not, a DVD release will soon be on the horizon so keep it here and I'll keep you informed as things progress.

<http://www.best-horror-movies.com/news?name=birth-of-the-living-dead-gets-a-debut-date-and-its-not-far-off>



'Birth of the Living Dead' Gets a Debut Date and it's Not Far Off!

August 26, 2013

By Matt Molgaard - Staff Writer

Remember that insanely promising documentary about George Romero's *Night of the Living Dead*? No? Well here's a quick tidbit of what I had to say last month: *Birth of the Living Dead* looks like a highly informative, gripping documentary that drops readers in a completely different time period, loaded with simultaneous hope and terror – far distanced from the comfort of the camera and far distanced from the lifestyle of today.

We've got some outstanding news for Romero and zombie fans alike. The flick is seeing a quick release. Quick enough to land in the laps of horror fans just in time for Halloween. *Birth of the Living Dead* will make its official debut on October 18th when the documentary premieres at Los Angeles' Arena Cinema.

If you're a Southern California resident, this is terrific news. *BOTLD* is one of those documentaries that has the horror community buzzing, and there's good reason. We're going to be gifted an in depth examination of the making of the picture, and we'll see plenty of focal figures discussing one of the features that left an unwavering impact on the genre.

If you're in So-Cal go see this!

In 1968 a young college drop-out named George A. Romero directed "*Night of the Living Dead*," a low budget horror film that shocked the world, became an icon of the counterculture, and spawned a zombie industry worth billions of dollars that continues to this day.

"*Birth of the Living Dead*," a new documentary, shows how Romero gathered an unlikely team of Pittsburghers — policemen, iron workers, teachers, ad-men, housewives and a roller-rink owner — to shoot, with a revolutionary guerrilla, run-and-gun style, his seminal film. During that process Romero and his team created an entirely new and horribly chilling monster -- one that was undead and feasted upon human flesh.

This new documentary also immerses audiences into the singular time in which "*Night*" was shot. Archival footage of the horrors of Vietnam and racial violence at home combined with iconic music from the 60s invites viewers to experience how Romero's tumultuous film reflected this period in American history. "*Birth of the Living Dead*" shows us how this young filmmaker created a world-renowned horror film that was also a profound insight into how our society really works.

<http://dailydead.com/birth-of-the-living-dead-trailer-and-poster/>



Birth of the Living Dead Trailer and Poster

This Night of the Living Dead documentary was previously known as Year of the Living Dead and has been playing at a number of festivals since 2012. Now named Birth of the Living Dead, it appears that the movie may be closer to a DVD and/or VOD release. Take a look at the new poster, along with the official Birth of the Living Dead trailer:

“In 1968 a young college drop-out named George A. Romero directed “Night of the Living Dead,” a low budget horror film that shocked the world, became an icon of the counterculture, and spawned a zombie industry worth billions of dollars that continues to this day.

“Birth of the Living Dead,” a new documentary, shows how Romero gathered an unlikely team of Pittsburghers — policemen, iron workers, teachers, ad-men, housewives and a roller-rink owner — to shoot, with a revolutionary guerrilla, run-and-gun style, his seminal film. During that process Romero and his team created an entirely new and horribly chilling monster — one that was undead and feasted upon human flesh.

This new documentary also immerses audiences into the singular time in which “Night” was shot. Archival footage of the horrors of Vietnam and racial violence at home combined with iconic music from the 60s invites viewers to experience how Romero’s tumultuous film reflected this period in American history. “Birth of the Living Dead” shows us how this young filmmaker created a world-renowned horror film that was also a profound insight into how our society really works.”

<http://www.joblo.com/horror-movies/news/release-details-for-birth-of-the-living-dead>



Horror Movie News

Release details for Birth of the Living Dead

Aug. 14, 2013by: Ryan Miller

It wasn't too long ago when we got our first taste of the trailer for BIRTH OF THE LIVING DEAD, a documentary that takes a look at the making-of one of the greatest independent horror films of all time — George A. Romero's NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD. Word has come in today that the doc will be released on VOD outlets on November 6th. As far as a Blu-ray/DVD release, an announcement is expected soon. This documentary will no doubt be a must see for any fan of the zombie genre as we'll get a fantastic look behind the making of one of horror's most classic films.

<http://philsfilmadventures.blogspot.com/2013/03/phil-attends-cinequest-23-day-five.html>

Phil attends CINEQUEST 23: Day Five-March 2, 2013

The last film I saw today was the midnight screening of the horror film BIRTH OF THE LIVING DEAD. Directed by Rob Kuhns, the film examines and chronicles the making of director George Romero's 1968 horror film classic NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD, it's importance in the horror genre, and its lasting impact on society and pop culture.

The film was preceded by a short entitled THE MEETING. This British short's about Jack, a seasoned Police Inspector, is summoned to a meeting by his former subordinate and protégé, Michael. The meeting, however, doesn't go too well and both men's lives are forever affected by this one meeting.

Rob's documentary is filled with cool movie trivia, with Romero himself detailing all the facts about how the film was made. With commentary provided by film historians, horror fans, (and again Romero), this is a horror fan's wet dream come true. NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD is regarded as one of the most important horror films ever made. If you want to learn more about the film, how it was made, or if you've never seen the film yet, then you must see this documentary. After the screening, Rob Kuhns participated in a fun Q&A session. The film will be screened again on Monday, March 4th at 5pm and on Friday, March 8th at 9:45pm. Make sure you check out the film's official website at

<http://birthofthelivingdead.com>.

<http://backwoodshorror.com/night-of-the-living-dead-documentary-coming-this-fall/>



NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD DOCUMENTARY COMING THIS FALL!

For those of you (like me) living in the NYC area, the IFC Center will be premiering the new Night Of The Living Dead documentary BIRTH OF THE LIVING DEAD this fall (November 6th 2013)! Check out the details in the following press release:

In 1968 a young college drop-out and aspiring filmmaker named George A. Romero directed Night of the Living Dead, a low-budget horror film that shocked the world, became an icon of the counterculture, and invented the modern movie zombie, which has spawned legions of films, books, comics, and video games, generating billions of dollars.

Night of the Living Dead is not only internationally recognized as an art film, revered for its groundbreaking treatment of American race relations and allegorical references to the Vietnam war, the film still maintains its cult status as a classic horror masterpiece. The film made history when it simultaneously screened at MOMA and the notorious grind-house theater circuit on 42nd Street. Since its release Night of the Living Dead has been selected for preservation by the Library of Congress and the National Film Registry.

<http://www.dreadcentral.com/news/69534/release-news-documentary-birth-living-dead-rises-explore-game-changing-impact-night-livin>



Release News: Documentary Birth of the Living Dead Rises Up to Explore Game Changing Impact of Night of the Living Dead

If there's a single horror film that has been more influential than any other, it's George A. Romero's Night of the Living Dead, the film that forever changed the way zombies were depicted.

Enough can never be said about its impact on the genre, and headed our way is a feature-length documentary that will be exploring precisely that. We've experienced the Night, the Dawn, and the Day; and now it's time to witness the Birth of the Living Dead!

Birth of the Living Dead opens at the IFC Center in New York City on November 6th.

<http://www.grizzlybomb.com/2013/09/13/new-documentary-detailing-romeros-birth-living-dead/>



Here's an exciting one for all of you George A. Romero and zombie fans alike; coming this fall is your chance to see Birth of the Living Dead, an exciting new documentary exploring how Romero brought his classic Night of the Living Dead to the screen. The trailer has also recently been released for you to cast your undead loving eyes on!

Birth of the Living Dead is an in-depth documentary written, directed and edited by Rob Kuhns and produced by Esther Cassidy. It details how Romero gathered an unlikely team of Pittsburgh citizens — policemen, iron workers, teachers, ad-men, housewives and a roller-rink owner — to shoot, with a revolutionary guerrilla, run-and-gun style, his seminal film, Night of the Living Dead. During that process, Romero and his team created an entirely new and horribly chilling monster — one that was undead and feasted upon human flesh.

Shot in New York City, Toronto and Los Angeles between the end of 2006 and the Summer of 2011, Birth of the Living Dead immerses audiences into the singular time in which "Night" was shot and studies how Romero created a world-renowned horror film that was also a profound insight into how our society really works.

For the film, Kuhns carried out extensive interviews with George A. Romero in Toronto. Kuhns' previous experience working as an editor for "Bill Moyers Journal" and later on "Moyers and Company," gave him the opportunity to explore the powerful archival images of American history in the 1960s. Kuhns surveyed television news stories of the racial violence exploding across the country and horrific combat footage of the Vietnam War. He also saw the U.S. government responses to both. Kuhns realized that Romero and his collaborators created "Night of the Living Dead," a film about the world coming to an end, at a historic time of enormous American upheaval. "Night" was revealing itself as a living document of the time in which it was made.

The Zombie craze is currently at its peak and it is great to see such a talented team put so much effort and love into documenting how it all began. Without Romero and Night of the Living Dead, the horror movie scene would not be the industry it is today. Romero opened the door to independent movie makers to get out there and do their own thing, even with the tiniest of budgets. A tradition that the likes of Jason Blum and Blumhouse productions still carry on today. By the looks of it, Kuhn's documentary will be the quintessential visual guide to Romero and his creations.

Birth of the Living Dead will be screening across the US throughout October. Head over to the official website for details of when they will be at a screen near you.

http://www.toplessrobot.com/2013/09/birth_of_the_living_dead_new_george_romero_doc_put.php



Birth of the Living Dead: New George Romero Doc Puts Zombies in Historical Context

Luke Y. Thompson September 24, 2013

If not for a minor copyright technicality, the zombie as we know it today - flesh-eating, rotting, transformatively biting, only killable by headshots - would still be entirely owned by George A. Romero, and the lives of people like Robert Kirkman and Zack Snyder might look very, very different. Romero is often praised for his social commentary, but a lot of modern viewers don't necessarily know what he's commenting on - this new documentary produced by indie horror maven Larry Fessenden's Glass Eye Pix firmly situates it in the climate of 1968, with the peace and love era culminating in the Vietnam war and race riots.

I'm more of a *Dawn* guy, myself, but of course that would never have happened without the *Night*. Though it won't be long before kids are watching the former and going "What the hell's a 'shopping mall'?"

Check out the Romero doc trailer after the jump.

http://www.hispanicbusiness.com/2013/7/27/cape_cod_times_hyannis_mass_tim.htm



July 27--What do Richard Nixon, Anita Hill and "Night of the Living Dead" director George Romero have in common?

All are subjects of documentaries playing at the 22nd annual Woods Hole Film Festival, which opened Friday and runs through next Saturday.

I've seen five of the feature films playing at the festival, three documentaries and two narratives, and if you could flip a five-sided coin to determine which one you'd see, you couldn't lose. Of course, why see just one? Try to see them all.

Rob Kuhns' "Birth of the Living Dead" details the making of the granddaddy of all zombie flicks, "Night of the Living Dead," in 1967 by then 27-year-old director George Romero. Based in Pittsburgh, Romero had been making industrial films, commercials and, yes, short films for Mister Rogers before embarking on the low-budget project that would make him a horror-movie legend.

Kuhns' documentary includes interviews with Romero and others, and clips from "Night of the Living Dead" as it recalls the making of the film -- made for the minuscule budget of \$114,000 and featuring many nonprofessionals in roles (a steel worker as a sheriff, ad-executive former clients of Romero as flesh-eating zombies, etc.). It also provides the context of the times, and how the fact that one of the leads was a black man and the film didn't blatantly make note of the fact that he was black was actually ground-breaking.